

**Vermont Agency of Natural Resources
SFY 2012 Ecosystem Restoration Grants**

Request for Pre-Proposals

As part of the Department of Environmental Conservation's (DEC) on-going efforts to reduce surface water pollution from phosphorus and sediment, the fiscal year 2012 state budget includes capital funds to support ecosystem restoration projects. DEC is currently seeking project pre-proposals due by **July 15, 2011**. This is anticipated to be the only opportunity to apply for Ecosystem Restoration Grants in FY12.

While budgets for pre-proposals are expected to vary widely, typical project budgets range between \$10,000 and \$75,000. Funding for projects is contingent upon availability of Ecosystem Restoration and Protection Capital funds.

DEC is specifically interested in proposals designed to improve water quality, including but not limited to projects that: improve stream stability, incorporate the science of fluvial geomorphology in river corridor management decisions, protect against flood hazards, and improve in-stream and riparian habitat; mitigate the effects of stormwater runoff from developed land areas, including downtowns and backroads; promote low impact development practices; protect and restore riparian wetlands; re-establish lake shoreline native vegetation and related shoreline erosion corrections; directly address in-lake (internal) phosphorus loading conditions; and enhance the environmental sustainability of agricultural lands.

From the proposals received, DEC's Project Review Committee will select projects for full or partial funding. Proponents of selected projects will then be asked to develop project work plans and more detailed budgets for review and approval by the Director of the Ecosystem Restoration Program (formerly "Clean & Clear").

Program Goals and Funding Categories

The goal of the Ecosystem Restoration Grants program is to *reduce the long-term nutrient and sediment loading from, and/or increase nutrient and sediment storage in, Vermont watersheds*. To achieve this goal, DEC has established three broad categories for Ecosystem Restoration projects. These are described with some additional detail below:

1. **Project Identification and Development;** site assessments, data analysis, project prioritization, infrastructure mapping, project planning and design, and securing stakeholder project commitments.
2. **Project Implementation;** accomplishes ecosystem restoration through the construction or implementation of a specific project plan.
3. **Land Conservation/Easement Acquisition;** ensure permanent protection of critical natural resources, including river corridors, lakeshores, and wetlands.

DEC anticipates awarding approximately 20% of the available funding for Project Identification and Development efforts, 40% for Project Implementation, and 40% for Land Conservation/Easement Acquisition projects.

Eligibility Tests for Ecosystem Restoration Grant proposals:

The source of funds for the Ecosystem Restoration Grant funds is state capital appropriations. These funds are restricted to tangible capital investments, but may include the planning, design and engineering directly associated with a tangible capital investment. There are certain types of projects that cannot be considered for funding. These include projects whose primary focus is: 1) the control of invasive species; 2) broad-based education and outreach activities; and 3) adoption of water quality friendly zoning; 4) monitoring that is not directly required for project identification and development; and 5) long-term operation and maintenance activities except those necessary during a reasonable post-construction period to complete the project (e.g., replantings). In addition, the following will be considered in reviewing pre-proposals:

- The costs of design, permitting, and implementation are reasonable given the overall gains in water quality, stormwater quantity mitigation, aquatic and riparian habitat and/or fluvial erosion hazard reduction.
- All project partners have demonstrated the level of commitment necessary to complete the project. For implementation projects, the landowner(s) is committed, and has conceptually agreed to participate in the project.
- The necessary mechanisms for continued success and longevity of the project have been identified. Steps have been taken to minimize likelihood that the completed project will fail because of unmitigated constraints (e.g., a contributing stressor that cannot be removed) or there is clear intention/commitment that such steps will be addressed and/or incorporated in the design and implementation of the project. These mechanisms will be somewhat specific to the type of project, but generally include:
 - ◆ For Stormwater projects:
 - Site and project design allow for ease of access and maintenance, inspection, and monitoring; a maintenance plan and responsibility for maintenance have been established.
 - ◆ For River Corridor projects:
 - Minimized likelihood that the completed project will fail due to anticipated channel adjustments in the river reach or the watershed.
 - Ability to demonstrate that the project will not lead or contribute to channel instability and increased pollutant loading from upland, upstream or downstream reaches.
 - ◆ For Wetlands and Lake Shoreland projects:
 - Contributing stressors have been identified and mitigated to the extent practicable and the project is adequately designed to withstand natural forces from wave action or ice.
 - ◆ For Roadway projects:
 - Projects have been identified through comprehensive planning, as part of the Better Backroads Program or similar.
 - ◆ For Agriculture projects:
 - Projects have exhausted other available funding mechanisms, including but not limited to programs available through the Agency of Agriculture (e.g., Conservation Reserve Enhancement Program, Best Management Practices) and/or the Natural Resources Conservation Service (e.g., Environmental Quality Incentives Program, Wetland Reserve Program).

Projects funded by the Ecosystem Restoration Program are **not** limited to the Lake Champlain Basin, and DEC anticipates the continued funding of a variety of projects state-wide. Proposed projects must be consistent with the program goals and meet **all** of the eligibility tests listed above.

Pre-Proposal Review Criteria

Higher priority will be given to projects that incorporate one or more of the following elements. Approximate weights that will be given to each criterion during the pre-proposal review process are indicated in parentheses.

- Technical merit of the pre-proposal and environmental benefits to be gained through mitigation of multiple stressors identified in the Vermont Surface Water Management Strategy (www.vtwaterquality.org), such as channel erosion, encroachment, land erosion, nutrient loading, and flow alteration. (30%)
- Municipal adoption of river corridor and/or shoreland protections covering the project area. (Note that these Ecosystem Restoration grant funds are being provided as an incentive to encourage municipal adoption and implementation of zoning bylaws that protect river corridors and buffers, consistent with Act 110 of 2010.) (15%)
- Technical capability of the grantee to accomplish the project independently with little DEC staff assistance. (15%)
- Promotion of green infrastructure such as easements, buffers, or low impact development. (10%)
- Incorporation of additional funding sources or other resources in a way that substantially expands the project scope and environmental benefits. (10%)
- Enhancement of local capacity for project development or implementation. (10%)
- Documented track record of successful implementation of related projects. (5%)
- High demonstration or educational value. (5%)

Who May Apply

Vermont municipalities, local or regional governmental agencies, non-profit organizations, and citizens groups are eligible to receive Ecosystem Restoration Grants. Internally generated DEC proposals may also be considered through this process. Individuals, for-profit entities, and federal agencies are not eligible to receive funds directly, but may partner with an eligible project sponsor.

Please note: a single entity or organization may submit ***no more than two pre-proposals*** (each containing no more than one project) in response to this request.

Contents of Proposals

Pre-proposals are to be no more than two pages in length and must address each of the following:

- Briefly describe the project, including: project goals, tasks to be performed, and the environmental concerns or needs that will be addressed. Project description should:
 - Explain how the proposed project will address or avoid a water quality problem related to excessive sediment and/or nutrient loading
 - Identify specific products to be delivered, with deadlines
 - Identify key staff who will be involved in the project and their respective roles and/or functions. If appropriate, explain how landowner(s) have been involved.
 - Provide a summary of project costs, including estimates for personnel, overhead, other direct costs and subcontractor costs

- Is this project an outgrowth of a specific planning process? For example, has the project been identified in a Total Maximum Daily Load implementation plan and/or river corridor, watershed or other state or municipal-sponsored water resource plan? If so, provide a specific reference.
- Is this project scope part of a larger effort, such as a single project that provides both river corridor protection and eliminates direct animal access to surface waters? If so, briefly explain the larger effort.
- Other than applying for this grant, describe any steps that the landowner and/or municipality have taken or are taking to address the need for this project. Examples include adopting municipal road and crossing standards, implementing shoreland or river corridor protection or conservation zoning, or creating a stormwater utility.
- Matching funds are not required. However, all sources and amounts of financial match should be listed. Match can consist of cash, donation, and in-kind contributions.

Providing a map of the project location and/or illustrative photos as part of the pre-proposal is strongly encouraged, and will not count toward the two-page limit.

Grant recipients will be expected to issue a news announcement to local media while the project is in progress or upon completion. The news release should describe the project and sources of funding. The DEC may issue a news release upon execution of the grant agreement.

Insurance Requirements

Grant recipients will be required to provide certificates of insurance to show that the following minimum coverage is in effect. Grant recipients shall name the State of Vermont and its officers and employees as an additional insured.

Workers Compensation (In accordance with the laws of the State of Vermont)

General Liability and Property Damage (\$1,000,000 per occurrence)

Automotive Liability (\$1,000,000 combined single limit)

Proposal Submission

Respondents are strongly encouraged to contact the DEC Watershed Coordinators for the applicable river basin during the preparation of pre-proposals. The Watershed Coordinators will be able to link applicants to the appropriate technical assistance and guidance for developing projects that best meet the priorities and review criteria of the Ecosystem Restoration Grants Program. A map of Vermont river basins with links to contact information for the Watershed Coordinators in each basin is available at:

http://www.vtwaterquality.org/planning/htm/pl_basins.htm

Pre-proposals should be submitted in electronic format (Portable Document Format preferred), clearly marked, and emailed to Heather Bullett (heather.bullett@state.vt.us). The deadline for submission is 4:00 pm on Friday, July 15, 2011.

For additional information or questions regarding the pre-proposal process, please contact Eric Smeltzer at: 802-241-3792 or eric.smeltzer@state.vt.us